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# Experiences of unemployed clients with services offered them by the front office of the Bridge project



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**EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYED CLIENTS WITH  
SERVICES OFFERED THEM BY THE FRONT OFFICE OF  
THE BRIDGE PROJECT.**

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The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge project to the services offered them by the front office. The Bridge project organises programs to ease immigrant's integration. The project also aid immigrant's integration with supervision, information and education through front office activity.

This study used a qualitative research approach and the method of data collection was in-depth interviews. The participants were selected using snow ball sampling method and they were selected from clients who have visited the Bridge front office. Three unemployed clients were interviewed and the interview data was analysed through the method of content analysis to search for an answer to the question; what are the experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge project to the services offered them by the front office?

The main findings of this study showed that client's chances of gaining employment had increased after visiting the front office of Bridge. Some clients have started receiving calls from employers and that they have high hopes of being employed soon. Clients have been empowered by the services they received at Bridge. Clients knowledge has increased as compared to the time they had not visited the front office and that gaining this new knowledge will help them in gaining employment soon.

On the basis of the findings, this study concluded that the Bridge project with its well structured programs has helped unemployed clients in searching and applying for job openings and through that their chances of gaining employment has increased. Also the information that Bridge front office gives to clients about the study of Swedish language has helped clients to be empowered with a new language.

Key words: Empowerment and advocacy theories, Bridge services structure and unemployed immigrants.

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## 1 Introduction

“Unemployment is economic condition marked by the fact that individuals actively seeking jobs remain unhired. Unemployment is expressed as a percentage of the total available work force”. (Investor words 2009). The level of unemployment varies with economic conditions and other circumstances. According to United Nations report the number of unemployed globally remained at a record high of almost 200 million in the year 2006. With strong worldwide economic growth in the same year, only small number of people living on less than \$2 per day was able to increase their income to more than \$2 a day and there are indications that this trend will continue. (United Nations News Centre, 2006).

Unemployment among immigrants is higher than the main population. In Finland, “the general unemployment rate of immigrants was about 29% at the beginning of last year. In comparison, the unemployment rate for the Finnish population was 9 %”. ( Statistics Finland). Most of the immigrants who arrived in Finland are professional in their country of origin. Most of them have gained experience in their respective field over the years in their country of origin yet when they arrive in Finland, they find it difficult to find job openings and even apply for job opening. Since most of them also arrive in Finland accompanied by their family members including children help should be offered them to find job so that it does not affect the integration of the family members. When something happens to the development of children, it manifest in their adulthood and so help should be given to their parent who might be professionals to gain employment so that their development is not compromise.

There is a direct link between participation in the labour market and social exclusion. This assertion has been confirmed by many writers. “The simple equation of unemployment with social exclusion seems to become explicit with the statement that many unemployed eventually find jobs, while others join the ranks of the socially excluded for good”. (Littlewood 2001:56). This is true since some immigrant who could not find job finds it difficult to integrate properly and that they became socially excluded for good. This is because integration and social exclusion are related in some ways that if one fails to integrate well in his or her environment, that person become excluded in the environment around him or her because he or she does not benefit fully from his or her society. Integration policy “refers to societal measures, which are used to encourage immigrant to find an active role in society” (Forsander 2002:99). This helps us to understand that without integration policy, it will be difficult for society to integrate foreigners.

As the rate of unemployment in Finland increases, the rate of immigrant unemployment also increases and as such services should be provided to help them in finding new job opening and also improving services that is already being offered. Luckan, the Finnish-Swedish

multicultural centre offers services to clients in areas such as integration, immigrant unemployment and Swedish language courses whiles Bridge is a project in finding ways of improving the services offered at Luckan centre. Bridge project undertakes a number of projects to help unemployed immigrants.

The study is based on empowerment approach and advocacy theory. This study used in-depth interviews to collect the data and the questions were semi-structured and open ended. The purpose of the interview is to probe the ideas of the interviewees about the how they view the services they receive at the front office of the Bridge project. Three interviews were conducted using in-depth approach and content analysis was used to analysis the data. The study found out those unemployed clients who visited the front office has started receiving job offers from employers and that their chances of gaining employment have increased. Also, unemployed clients felt they have been empowered by learning Swedish language and that it has increased their chances of gaining employment. Again, unemployed client felt they have been networked with other related agencies and that their scope of information on immigrant activities has increased.

## 2 Theoretical framework

This study was based on empowerment theory and advocacy theory. Other literatures were also used in the analysis of this study. The key concepts of this study are empowerment and advocacy theories, unemployed client of immigrant origin and Bridge service structure.

### 2.1 Empowerment and advocacy theories.

Empowerment as defined by Lee 2001 states that “it’s a process whereby the social worker engages in a set of activities with the client, that aim to reduce the powerlessness that has been created by the negative valuations based on membership in a stigmatized group” (Lee 2001:33,34). This is very true since most of the clients with immigrant background find it difficult to find job though some of them are more than qualified to be offered the job.

Empowerment is also about people participating in choices that affect their lives and gives them greater control. (Smale, Tuson and Statham 2000:38). Examples are The Disabled People’s Movement which speaks about their independent living, The Black Empowerment Movement which talks about issues effecting Black people and The Women empowerment Movements which talks about ways of empowering women to name just a few.

“Empowerment involves a complex understanding of how power is exercise and how it affects them, but also of how they exercise and create their own power” (Fook 2002:103,104).

Because of this statement care should also be taken when empowering a group since it might end up disempowering them. Again care should also be taken because empowering a group might also end up disempowering another group.

There are many processes to use to empower people, one such process is the deconstructive/reconstruction process. This process is used in the analyses of situations and also changes about types of situations in which we might find ourselves working. It ranges from more micro level organisational work settings and interpersonal engagement with service users environments to mid range national policy and community context, to a less macro level context of economic and global trends(Fook 2002:104). This is where the Bridge project fits into the explanation of how this process is use to empower people. By designing and implementing most of their programs, Bridge empowers immigrants to face the job market more prepared than when they arrived in Finland.

Unemployment slows down integration process of immigrants and their family. “Higher levels of employment result in less poverty and a more inclusive society” (Askonas and Stewart 2000:163). This statement is very true since high unemployment leads to less spending and less spending leads to fewer saving and fewer saving leads to poverty and so the cycle of

poverty increases in immigrant environment. When that happens, unemployed immigrants become less pro-active in their environment and when they are less pro-active it affects both their economic integration and social integration. The saddest thing is that when they have children, it also affects the children integration and development.

The levels of empowerment helps to explain well how to deal with unemployed immigrant. In her book Lee (2001) explained the three levels as personal level, interpersonal level and political level.

Personal level deals with the oppression of class, colour and the coping abilities of the individual. "Individual vulnerabilities and the direct obstacles posed by institutional racism and classism block opportunity structures, limit life choices, and pose threats to the development of competence, self-direction, and self-esteem." (Lee 2001:51). This really talks about exclusion and so efforts should be made to include vulnerable groups into society. One way of doing this is by empowering them. If all effort is not made to empower unemployed immigrants to gain employment, they loss self-direction and focus. It also affects their self-esteem. This is because most of them were professional in their home country before migrating to Finland and so if after some time they fail to gain employment, it will affect their self-esteem.

In the interpersonal level Lee (2001) states that the structures that work against the damage that is usually caused by oppression and the force of direct power blocks are strong family, group, and the community structures and the biculturalism. In effect the individual combines these structures to help him or her to fight oppression thereby empowering one's self. The individual achieve this by empowering him or herself with the help of this direct power blocks.

In the political level, Lee (2001) concluded that people who have been empowered forge ties and come together to fight oppression in their community. They may be smaller groups but then once they identify that they are facing similar challenges, they come together forming a larger group and fight oppression. What it tells is that various unemployed immigrant can come together and develop strategies that will help them gain employment. "Through collectively people draw the strength they need to empower themselves and attain actualized, unique personhood and social responsibility" ( Lee 2001:52).

In their book, Fishman, Aertselear and Putz talked about how language can be a means to empower groups. They talked about how linguistic has power and language can modify power. Also the book explained that language with the power it has can control the way people behave. It also talked about how language helps people to be approved socially and that in



turn leads to self confidence which itself leads to job access and job success. The power of learning some specific language has helped in the establishment of family control. This is because in families where income was low, the learning of a specific language by a partner has led to higher income earning and this has helped in such families. (Fishman, Aertselear and Putz 2006:8).

Advocacy is the “pursuit of influencing outcome including policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic and social system and institutions that directly affect people lives. Public advocacy is a planned and organised set of actions to effectively influence public policies and have then implemented in a way that would empower the marginalised”. (Singh 2004)

Advocacy is also defined as “an attempt, having a greater than zero probability of success, by an individual or group to influence another individual or group to make a decision that would not have been made otherwise and that concerns the welfare or interest of a third party who is in a less powerful status than the decision makers” (Compton and Galaway 1994:434). This makes the advocate the speaker to the client and as such argues and represents the client in situations that the clients lack information or have no issue.

In advocacy, the goal is to make the client successful in the situation affecting him or her. The advocate does that by negotiating, bargaining, debating and manipulating the environment on behalf of the client. By organising a press conference and pleading with Finnish-Swedish companies to employ qualify immigrants, Bridge advocates for the immigrants for them to find Jobs. Advocacy involves either an “individual or group, or their representatives, pressing their case with influential others, about situations which either affect them directly or, and more usually, try to prevent proposed changes, which will leave them worse off” (Mattaini, Lowery and Meyer 1998: 221).

Advocacy is usually working in support of something that people believe in. Advocacy also involves working in communities with public officials and the media all working together to achieve one common goal. There have been suggestions on effectively applying advocacy in clients work. It is therefore important to be flexible and understand the importance of strategies either short, medium or long term and plan tactics that reflects these strategies. We must take note that we do not set our expectation too high or too low. If we set our expectation too high we might not reach that expectation and that will be difficult to motivate and encourage ourselves and clients to go on. If we set our expectations too low we might not be able to reach our potentials. If we gauge the political environment accurately and target our audiences and also check our strength and weakness, we will be able to set our expectations just right and by so doing we can motivate ourselves and become successful.

Advocates working with immigrants need to protect expand immigration agenda by expanding their energy and resources in the short and long term because immigration will continue to become a public issue. Advocates also need to understand the importance of focusing on local and national levels. While working with public officials and the media, advocates should make sure a negative story does not go unanswered. Also advocates should always make contact with public officials and the media. In that case advocates can set their selves to long term goals on working effectively with immigrants. Usually, people oppose to immigration will want to use harsh language to create panic and fear into people. They might do this by equating immigration topics with terrorism. (Immigrant resource center 2009).

They might also deal on negative effect of immigration like cities being flooded with unemployed people, increased budget of the state and ethnic divisions spreading. Advocates need to explain to such people that immigrants are not equal to terrorists and that they are central to the economic growth of the state and that welcoming immigrant does best describe the state tradition and heritage. Immigrant's topics need to be focused on the family, investment, opportunity and the community and also maintain that immigrant's has benefitted the state. If advocates want to be successful, they need to learn new skills that are easy to learn and can help them in effectively working with immigrants. (Immigrant resource center 2009).

Such skills can be learning new technologies, knowing how to talk to different kind of audiences, understanding new issues and knowing how to satisfy audience on topics that are important to them. Advocates should frequently contact public officials and educate them on immigrant issues, inviting them to talk to the community and always keep them up to date to issues that affect the communities. Technology offers "immigration advocates many opportunities, including the ability to communicate more easily and cheaply, work together more efficiently and reach interested people, elected officials, and the general public more broadly" (Immigrant resource center 2009).

Social workers are expected to empower service users and they do this by attaining special skills. They empower service users to take part in assessments and decision making. Also, social workers make sure service users gain access to advocacy services if it becomes impossible to represent their views. The requirements for this special skills that social workers need can be found in representation, key role support and advocacy. It could be noted that both advocacy and empowerment emphasis on meeting the rights and needs of clients who could have been marginalised. Empowerment usually involves consulting service users to involve themselves in service planning. (Leadbetter, 2002: 201).

Although the term empowerment is always used by social workers in their daily work with clients, it has become ambiguous as there are no detailed explanations of how empowerment can be achieved or even what it really means by writers. Because of this some social workers usually argue that the word empowerment is just a key word that has over the years become popular in social work but actually have little meaning in practice. Other social workers also argue that it is very difficult to empower clients and that in practice professionals still hold much power and that they only ready to share such power under circumstances that suites them.( Leadbetter, 2002: 202).

According to a study in the United States ([www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)), it was observed that on the skill distribution of immigrant labour force larger numbers of immigrants are at the top and bottom in the shape of an hourglass. It was observed that about thirty percent of non-native workers have qualifications lower than a high school certificate, with about twenty-eight percent having a first degree. It was also observed that almost 10 percent of Americans either do not speak English or their level of the English language was very low and out of that ten percent, about 90 percent are non-natives. The current workforce system has got few responses from the low skilled foreign workers. Recent studies have also indicated that some high skilled foreign workers and semi skill workers face enormous problems in getting recognition for their educational credentials and work experiences. Some of these educational credentials and work experiences that these foreigners have are credentials and experience that they got before arriving in the United States. Some of these workers sometimes are not familiar with job searches and techniques to find job and so they need assistance in searching for job. Normally, employers and regulatory bodies lack the needed know how to authenticate certifications that immigrants obtained before arriving in the United States. This ends up leaving many highly skilled immigrants into jobs that require lower skills than what they have. The National Research Council's Board on Testing and Assessment and the National Center for Educational Statistics has therefore assemble an expert panel to create a new framework for analysing the literacy level of adults and they will start with developing a measure of job site literacy that will be manage by National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) (United States of America migration policy institute, 2009).

Barnes and Walker 1996, identify one of the principles that should govern good practice as follows: 'empowerment should enable personal development as well as increasing influence over services' (Barnes and Walker, 1996:381). Service providers often seek to feature service users because they sometimes need feedback from service users so that they can make changes and better their services. What this is saying is that when service providers involve service users, it should end up personally empowering service users. In other word, both service providers and service users should benefit. For instance if service users feel that their

views have not been taken, they might feel that they have been ignored and that will lead to them feeling disempower instead of being empowered. In that case, then an advocate will be needed to speak on behalf of service users who might feel disempowered

## 2.2 Unemployed immigrant

Unemployed immigrants are unemployed people with immigrant background. These people normally migrate to Finland due to insecurity in their home country or they migrate to work or study. They are skilled and experienced in their field but find it difficult to gain employment due to language barrier, lack of information and bureaucracy.

Among the Nordic countries, Finland immigration patterns are different from its neighbours. In the history of Finland, Finland has been known to be a country of emigration. Immigrants to Finland have most of the time been returning migrants and their families. With the launch of the Nordic Labour market in 1954, Finland experienced profound emigration season. In about a decade of the launch of the common Nordic Labour market, about six percent of the Finns immigrated to Sweden. In the 1990s, the model of return migration and emigration to Finland changed as three groups of immigrants surfaced: refugees, labour migrants and Russia born returnees. Due to this, the population of non-Finnish speakers doubled in the last decade to the current rate of 2.2 percent of the total population of Finland. Immigrants growth rate corresponds to about forty percent of the annual population growth.

Although the essential of labour migration increases, it is most likely that family migration has been dominating the labour migration for two known reasons. First of all, in the 1990s Finland experienced harsh recession which leads to unemployment rate of the population rising to well over 20 percent which as for some time now reduced. For the immigrants, the labour situation was far more serious than what the natives experienced. Unemployment rate among immigrants during the recession in the 1990s rose to about fifty eight percent. Even though the recession gradually subsided, unemployment among the immigrant population is about forty percent now. Secondly, Finnish labour migration policy has been very constraining. Finnish law on labour migration gives citizens of European Union special access to the vacant jobs in Finland more than citizens from non-European Union. What this means is that the labour administration in Finland access whether a vacant job is available to a citizen of the European Union before a work permit will be issue to citizens from non-European Union.

The most spectacular change was the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It leads to the increasing number of ethnic Finns residing in the former Soviet republics migrating to Finland. Although ethnic Finns were granted the permit to return in the 1990s, the assessment of their ancestry was based on Soviet documentation. And so it became difficult to differentiate whether their assimilation process were similar to the Russian immigrants. The ministry of Labour in 1998 reported that with the age group of 24 years or younger of the ethnic Finns who have migrated from the former Soviet republics, only two percent have excellent Finnish language skills. As at the year 2003, persons born in the former soviet republics made up about forty percent of the Finnish population. (Statistics Finland 2009).

Finally, the number of asylum seekers from Finland increased drastically in the 1990s and although the number increased the numbers have remained small due to the strict refugee and asylum policy in Finland. Though the refugee and asylum policy of Finland has been very strict, refugees and their family make up about twenty percent of immigrants population in Finland. The largest refugee groups are from Somalia, Serbia, Iraq and Iran

When a foreigner arrives in Finland and does not already have a job offer before coming to Finland, the foreigner apply as an unemployed job seeking applicant at the job centre in the municipalities that he or she resides. There are usually an arrangement to first meet an employment consultant and the foreigner together with the employment consultant discuss the type of job that the foreigner or immigrant is willing to do. The educational level and skills of the immigrant are explored and then recorded in the database of the job centre. All the modalities that will help the immigrants to find work easily in the municipality will be explored and the how ready the immigrant is to start work will also be discussed. The job centre in consultation with the municipality social services come up with a plan for the immigrant based on the law of the municipality. Usually, it is a plan that discusses how the immigrant is going to integrate into his or her new environment, whether the immigrant is happy with his or her residence, how the immigrant is going to enroll to study Finnish or Swedish language, how the immigrant is going to update his or her educational and practical skills if any and how the immigrant is going to get other information that will help him or her to integrate well. Normally, the plan is a personal plan that is designed after the immigrant has been registered in the population register. Sometimes it is designed after the immigrant has been on income support for a period of five months. The immigrant will be on an integration allowance during the integration period which normally last for about three years after the immigrant has been registered in the population register. (City of Jyväskylä, immigrants pages, 2009). Although the various municipalities in Finland engage the immigrant in various programs that will help in securing job and thereby integrating, immigrant's unemployment continues to grow.

“When times are good, immigrants find work even when their knowledge of the Finnish language is not that great. When times are bad, they are the first ones to see their employment situation weaken”. (Helsinki Sanomat, 2007). This gives just a brief problem immigrant goes through even if they gain employment and things goes wrong economically. “Employment problems translate into broad unemployment among these immigrants, many-fold compared to the unemployment of the original population in many receiving countries” (Forsander 2002:95). This also tells us problems unemployed immigrants goes through in searching for jobs.

A recent study on assimilation of foreigners in Finland discovered that the changes of foreigners gaining employment has increased over a period of time that the immigrant lives in Finland. Although immigrants changes on gaining employment increased after living in Finland for a period of time, the employment probability of foreigners remains lower than the indigenous. Also since the rate of employment of the indigenous group also increases, the gap between the employment probability of immigrants and the indigenous continues on increase (Sarvimaki, Hämäläinen, Kangasharju and Pekkala 2005).

According to a research by Aini Pehkonen 2006, Finland has now become a country exporting labour to a country receiving immigrant. In her research, she interviews 30 immigrants and 4 labour officials on immigrant’s issues including employment. According to the findings of the study, most immigrants come to Finland by their free will while others come to Finland in search for job. Other groups also come to Finland to marry while the rest comes to Finland in search for new adventures. On immigrant’s probabilities to employments in Finland, the informants were of the view that the services offered them by the employment office have really helped them. One out of three respondents said they got information about employment vacancies from the employment office while one out of five respondents said they had to approach an employer for information on job vacancies. Most respondents also said the employment office has helped them in findings courses, work experience placements and training programs, and that the respondents were gratified with the services offered by the employment office. However, it was identified that the level of satisfaction of the services by the immigrants depended on their level of qualification. Those with higher qualification were less satisfied with the services while those with less qualifications were more satisfied with the services offered by the employment office. One program that those with qualifications and those with qualifications liked most was the work experience placement. In most cases, work experience placements lead to permanent employment or part-part work employment. Most of the respondents were of the view that, there should be more availability to the work experience placements and the internship program. Those with lesser qualifications were of the view that work experience placements and internships have really helped them to increase their knowledge. Respondent were not impressed about the

Finnish way of job search. They were surprised that employment office officials limited themselves in giving out information about job vacancy. The study also found out that immigrants wanted employment officials to advocate for them to employers about their skills and capabilities. Of all the respondents interviewed, 57% had found work for different periods with the help of friends and employment officials. Those immigrants who were self employed preferred to hire other immigrants. Reasons given for this included the inability of Finns to serve customers properly. Finns carefully guard demarcation lines in working life and the commonest reasons for moving to Finland given in this research were family reasons, either marriage to or a relationship with a Finn. The next most commonly expressed reasons for moving were job opportunities offered by multinational companies, desire for adventure, returned migration of persons of Finnish ancestry, and asylum seeking (Aini Pehkonen, 2006).

In countries with higher economic gains, immigrant's labour force is mention in the success story of such countries. In the United States of America for instance, foreign labour force have been mention in the success of the establishment of Silicon Valley. In Germany also skilled immigrants are mention in the success of various industries. In all these success stories, immigrant continues to find it difficult to find job though they are qualified.

Immigrants find it difficult to gain employment. "One reason for the high unemployment rate of immigrants in Finland is related to the fact that Finnish employers regard Finnish education and work experience as better than foreign equivalents".( Helsinki Sanomat 2005).

Immigrants who migrate to Finland are equally qualified and experience in the field but they finds it difficult to gain employment. In the world of globalisation, theories, design and implementation of processes in engineering, science and humanities therefore an engineer in Finland who drills tunnels uses the same equipments that his or her counterpart in Iraq also uses. This makes both of them though in different geographical location gain equal experience. Recruiting labour workforce from abroad will represent a partial solution to the demand for suitable labour. "To alleviate the structural change resulting from ageing population it has been proposed that replacement migration be used" (Forsander 2002:113). What is replacement migration used in this context? It is immigrants coming to take over jobs that the ageing population have retired from. This means that immigrants are needed now and later in the economic growth of Finland.

"Despite of good education and long work experience, it is hard for highly educated immigrants in Finland to find work that they are qualified to do" (Henna Kyha 2006). According to a research on empowering skilled immigrants, the writer argued that anti-oppressive practice has been an effective tool that helps social workers to gain understanding of the marginalization, oppression and exclusion of skilled immigrants. The writer also concluded that anti-oppressive practice is an important tool when working with minority

groups and that it helps in advocating for change and resistance for the immigrants. It also emancipates and empowers minority immigrants. The writes also concluded that when immigrants are denied employment based on reasons that are not related to their ability, it amounts to oppression and discrimination (Ransford Danso 2007) .Immigrant in Finland therefore needs all the necessary help gain employment. A society full of unemployment often has a consequence social problem. If the social problem does not manifest itself today, it will surely do in the near future.

### 2.3 Bridge service structure.

Bridge is a 3 years project started by Luckan centre and sponsored by RAY (Finnish slot machine association). It was started in 2008 and will end in 2010. The main aims of the project are to aid integration process for specific target groups with supervision, information and education through front office activity. Also it aims for a change of attitude in employees regarding immigrants as jobholders, and also in society in general and finally, to make Luckan, the Finnish-Swedish information and culture centre more embracing for immigrants and also to be able to offer customized service for the target group. Again, the Bridge project gives information and guidance to immigrants on job search, studies, leisure-time activities and other social services in the Helsinki metropolitan area.

Bridge also wants to open the Finnish-Swedish culture, the Swedish society and teach the Swedish language to targeted groups. Bridge believes that the Finnish-Swedish people have a lot to offer in terms of competence and commitment in minority and language issues. Bridge also wants to make it easier for immigrants to get to know the Finnish-Swedish people and also offer the Finnish-Swedish community an opportunity to get to know immigrants in Finland.

The activities of the Bridge project are managed by the front office which was opened on 11 August 2008. The aim of the front office is to offer services to the target groups and also update the web portals. The target groups are unemployed immigrants and students from foreign background. The goal of the web portal is to create a working web portal for the target group which quickens the customers search for information and as a surplus benefit also brings forth the Finnish-Swedish alternates.

The main service the front office gives is supervision and recruitment services. The goal of the supervision services is to make it easier for immigrant's integration process, offer information to clients and then work as a place of support. The programs under the supervision services are ; Mapping out and creation of contacts, Bridge customers,



information on job search, information about studies and information about leisure-time activity.

Under the mapping out and creation of contacts, Bridge projects heads will create contacts with the work force bureau's immigration unit and also visit Sweden to get familiar with integrations activities. The project heads will also visit Helsinki informational services for immigrants and Helsinki city services for immigrants. The aim of all this visits is to create contacts to aid immigrant's integration and also for Finnish-Swedish community to know immigrants well. With the Bridge customers, the personal of the project gives information to immigrants on job search, studies, leisure-time activities and other social services of the Swedish community. The information point is usually opened Mondays and Wednesdays 11-16, while appointments can be booked to meet the project coordinator. With the information on job search, the project coordinator helps customers to structure their Curriculum Vitae and adjust it to the Finnish context. The front office also helps customers to fill in job application on the internet, write letters of application and search for suitable jobs through the recruitment services online site. The customers can use the telephone, computers and the cost free internet to search for job openings. On the information about studies, Bridge informs immigrant students about study places and also different educational opportunities. With this one also, students can use the computer, internet, telephone, copy and fax services at the front office to search for study possibilities. Finally with the information about leisure-time activity, Bridge gives information about leisure-time activities to immigrants and the Swedish community. The customers can also use the computer, internet, copy and fax services cost-free to search for leisure activities.

The recruitments services also run programs by which immigrants and customers get information on work and job openings. The programs under the recruitments are ; Work forum on the net, trainee job for foreign students, training, mentorship and social coaching, course in job search and career planning, Swedish language courses, appeal to companies and organizations, portfolio, scholarship for job seekers, cultural workshops and events. Under the work forum on the net program, the new Luckan recruitment services on the net have been expanded to meet the needs of the Bridge project. The employer can now search for labour with an immigrant background by putting up a job advertisement on the recruitment services of Bridge. The goal of this program is that the work forum will be used both by the job seekers and the employers. With the trainee job for foreign students, Bridge project is increasing the contact between international students and Finnish-Swedish places of work. The aim is for Bridge to make it possible for more international students to do their internship in a Finnish-Swedish environment. Bridge's own goal about this program is make it possible for 6 international students to be offered trainee-ship in a Finnish-Swedish work environment and then by the end of the three years when the Bridge projects ends, the

number will raise to 18 international students. Also Bridge is in contact with various organizations to make it possible for young immigrant boys to be offered trainee-ship in a Finnish-Swedish environment.

Arbis in collaboration with Bridge arranges a beginner's course in Swedish at Luckan. The course starts on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October and ends on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October. The course is usually two hours long twice a week. The goal of the Swedish course program is to offer and inform participants the benefits of learning Swedish language. It will also raise the level of education and the participant's competence.

Bridge also initiated other events with the view of helping with the smooth integration of immigrants. In the autumn of 2008, Bridge organized a press conference and appealed to Finnish-Swedish companies and organizations to act by employing more immigrants to their companies and organizations. The aim of this press conference was to raise the awareness and realization that integration is something that starts on the individual level at the work environment. Again, Bridge has compiled a portfolio to companies and organizations about the importance of employing immigrants. The portfolio has thus become a tool working towards a change of attitude in Finnish-Swedish work environments. Bridge has been working with the Finnish-Swedish fund to establish a scholarship for immigrants to perform training language immersion in a Finnish-Swedish organization or company. The aim of this is to create an understanding and experience of integration for the Finnish-Swedish companies. Bridge has been organizing children culture workshops with professional artists with an immigrant background. The aim of these workshops will be that immigrants will be appreciated for their art and knowledge. Also it will offer children possibilities to come in contact with immigrants, in a natural way. Other workshops that Bridge organizes to ease integration of immigrants into the Finnish-Swedish communities are; Swedish week where the goal is to show the diversities that already exist in the Finnish-Swedish community and at the same time makes visible the Finnish-Swedish culture for immigrants. Bridge also in cooperation with Caisa multicultural centre offers culture workshops for schools with a multi-cultural theme. It is lead by immigrants who are professionals and its presented by the artists in their mother tongue but translated into Finnish language. Bridge also organizes workshops and seminars about immigration and its related subjects. From time to time Bridge organizes these workshops and seminars with the view of easing the integration process of immigrants.

A similar collaboration between ethnic leaders, businesses, law enforcement officials, educators and community advocates lead to the creation of Sioux Falls multicultural center. Sioux fall city is a growing in population due in part to the increase of immigrants and refugee families and also the city has a reputation as an attractive place to raise children and live peacefully. Families and people moving into Sioux fall city present opportunities as well as

challenge to both authorities and themselves. Those arriving should learn the English language if they are from non-English speaking country or city, learn the cultural norms of the city. New arrivals often have misunderstanding with security agencies if their orientation was poor. Also the city resources become strained as the city will have to spend more money to organise another orientation sessions for the new arrivals whose orientation was not well organise. Because of these problems opinion leaders and security agencies came together to form the Sioux fall multicultural centre. The main activities of Sioux fall multicultural centre is to help foreigners integrate well into their new environment. Sioux fall multicultural centre programs include; Respect and education program, Youth task force, cultural appreciation, housing partnerships, after school program and ethnic community meetings. Most of the programs of Sioux fall multicultural centre are to help new arrivals of Sioux fall city to integrate well and also to learn the cultural dynamics of Sioux fall city. Sioux fall multicultural centre also serves as a resource centre for immigrants seeking assistance with housing, health services, adult and youth services and cultural diversity. The benefits of forming Sioux fall multicultural centre are that immigrant's clashes with police have reduced and also immigrants have integrated faster than before the centre was formed. .( Sioux Falls muticulral center, 2006)

The Bridge project is evaluated by the Luckan board. The board is made up of the reference group who meet from time to time to evaluate the project. Also customers can fill in surveys at the front office of Luckan. Since the project ends in 2010 and funding from RAY will stop, Luckan is lobbying for funds from the municipalities so that the project will be part of Luckan activities.

### 3 Study design

The methodology of this study was based on qualitative method and was divided into informants, data collection and data analysis. The first part will explain the method used to select the informants, the second part will explain the methods used to collect the data and the final part will discuss the method used to analyze the data. The study was conducted to answer the question what are the experiences of unemployed clients with services offered them by the front office of the Bridge project?

#### 3.1 Informants

The participants of this study were chosen using snowball sampling method and the aim was to make this study more credible. They were chosen from the Bridge project and the idea was that by selecting the participants by snowball sampling method, a general view of the

customers experiences will be ascertain from the study. Informants are chosen for their competence not just for their representativeness. Snowball sampling uses recommendations to find people with the specific range of skills that has been determined as being useful. An individual or a group receives information from different places through a mutual intermediary. Snowball sampling uses recommendations to find people with the specific range of skills that has been determined as being useful, as such, snowball sampling aims to make use of community knowledge about those who have skills or information in particular areas. (Bernard 1994:165).

In otherwords, informants are chosen to have an impact on what researchers are investigating and not just to interview them. The Bridge project work is to ease the integration process for foreigners by supervising, informing and educating customers through front office activity. It also aims to change the attitudes in employees regarding immigrants as job seekers and jobholders and also to make Luckan, the Finnish-Swedish information and cultural center more embracing for immigrants. Bridge project in collaboration with Arbis organize Swedish language course for foreigners. By choosing Bridge project, the student hoped to get enough information and also to be highly motivated by working with a project whose core activities is to help immigrants. Interviews were conducted at various places in the Helsinki metropolitan area and normally, the participants choose the place for the interview. Though only men were chosen for the interviews, this study was not gender bias. The reason being that the target group for this study was unemployed immigrants and that almost all the customers who visit the Bridge project to search for job were men, the student did not have the option to choose from the other gender group. Had it been that some of the customers who visit the Bridge project to search for jobs were females, the student would have based the selection on gender.

The participant chosen were people who have visited the Bridge front office for some time now. Since the study was based on experiences of clients, clients level of experience and willingness to share such experiences were based on to select the participants. The participants chosen have been visiting the Bridge front office between two months and five months. Three interviews were conducted in this study and the participants age ranges between 32 to 36 years. The participants were from Tanzania, Cameroon and Kosovo.

### 3.2 Data collection

Qualitative method was used in this study and the interviews based on semi-structured because the study was investigating the experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge project. "In recent years qualitative methods have made its mark in social science research because it is more theoretical and conceptual". (Berg 2007:3). Qualitative research helps to

investigate facts and process that cannot be quantify and therefore it was helpful to use qualitative research methods in this study since this study investigated the feelings of individuals and that feelings cannot be quantify. Qualitative data refers to the collection of materials in a linguistic form that seeks to uncover the meanings and understandings of experiences and give clear view.

Qualitative research helps us to access unquantifiable facts about the people researchers observe and analyze about their personal traces. Qualitative methods help researchers to share in the understanding and perception of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their life (Berg 2007:9).

Qualitative research tends to be associated with the idea that social life is a product of social interaction and that the world is not populated by things but by relationships and actions. The study was investigating the meaning individual gives to events and processes and therefore the study used research method that focused on reality and objectivity. "Objectivity is associated with the notion of social structure as the key cause of social reality and key site for understanding" (David and Sutton 2004:36).

Qualitative researches are means for researchers to explore the main actor's interpretation of events or issues and to draw conclusions on them. Data for qualitative research are usually unstructured and that gives the researcher more room to explore well (Bryman and Burgess 1999:36). By using an unstructured method to collect data, researchers probe more based on the account given by the respondent and events that might have escaped the respondent might come back again.

Qualitative research emphasizes on words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data and also uses scientific observations that are not recorded in any standardized coding formats. Data from qualitative methods are expressed in words and information from that data talks about feelings, values and attitudes. Qualitative techniques is interested in something holistic from which elements can not merely be broken off and measured out of context. (David and Sutton 2004:37).

Qualitative data varied in nature. It includes any information that can be captured that is not numerical in nature. Qualitative data are usually collected using in-depth interviews, direct observation and written documents. This study used in-depth interviews to collect the data and the questions were semi-structured and open ended. In-depth Interviews include both individual interviews thus one-on-one as well as group interviews including focus groups. The data can be recorded in a wide variety of ways including stenography, audio recording, video recording or written notes. In interviews it is assumed that there is a questioner and one or more interviewees. The purpose of the interview is to probe the ideas of the interviewees

about the phenomenon of interest. (Research methods knowledge base, 2006).

Qualitative interviews “refers to interviews of a semi-structured type with a single respondent thus in-depth interview or a group of respondents thus focus interviews” (Bauer and Gaskell 2000:38). Interviewing is a technique for establishing different perspectives of events and not relying on individual view. Qualitative interviews ends up providing the background data for the development of an understanding of the relations between actors and situations.

This study used interviews because participants were telling their story, in other words they were voicing their experiences. The hallmark of a semi-structured interview is to design questions to follow a set of pattern based on what you what to investigate and that is what this study used. The interview questions of this study followed a set of questions in a structured way. The importance of setting out questions in advance lies in giving the researcher a sense of order from which to draw questions from unplanned encounters (David and Sutton 2004:87). Semi-structured interviews has a degree of structure and this structure differentiate it from a normal conversation because “an interview is a conversation with a purpose”(David and Sutton 2004:88).

Participants in this study were encouraged to discuss questions that come up and though the plan was to formulate questions based answers that the participants gives, only one question was formulated during the interviews that was conducted. The participants were able to give direct and straight to the point answers that asking related questions was not possible. In all the interviews that were conducted in this study, only one question was created during the interviews. Interview guide was used in these interviews and all the questions were based on the interview guide. Interviews were carried out on one-one bases and interview questions were formulated to direct the participant’s experiences on the questions being asked. The questions were open ended and the advantages of open ended questions are that the interviewer can provide additional explanation and also help the respondents understanding of the questions. Also in open ended questions, respondents answer questions in their own words. The various interviews took between 45 minutes to one hour and thirty minutes.

Interviews were conducted in the month of December 2009. Arrangement was made on phone with each participant and a suitable time and place was agreed. Each participant chooses the place for the interview and time. Before the time and place were agreed, participants were made to signed consent forms which gave the student permission to call the participants and arrange the place and time and also assured the participants of the information they will give out. The participants willingly talked about their experiences and since most of the participants were foreigners, the conversation continued on general issues concerning

immigrants in Finland after the interviews. Two interviews were conducted at the Helsinki library while the last interview was conducted at the Espoo keskus.

### 3.3 Data analysis.

Data collected for a qualitative research are analyzed to bring out the true reflection of the study done and also to find some pattern in the data collected and explain the existence of such a pattern. Therefore, qualitative data analysis is a systematic and transparent way of making sense and meaning to the data collected (Punch 2005:194). The method used should be systematic and easy to follow so that it does not confuse readers and also it should be transparent, in that the steps the researcher used to conclude should be easy to follow.

In this study, a voice recorder was used to collect data from the interviews conducted with the various respondents. In order to find patterns from the data collected and analyze well, content analysis was used to analyze the data and bring out some meaning to the data. Content analysis “involves systematic classification and counting of text to distill a large amount of material into a short description of some of its features” (Marvasti 2004:90). The use of content analysis in analyzing data is convenient as it simplifies and reduces large volumes of data into organized sections. Thus content analysis transforms the data collected into codes which helps in analyzing the data. Codes are “keywords, themes or phrases that may or may not correspond to actual terms in the text being analyzed” (David and Sutton 2004:203). The codes used in content analysis might be words that the participants used themselves or words that the researcher uses to represent what the respondent said. The idea of using codes is that it reduces the data so that analysis will be easier. The importance of using codes is that “if you cannot code it, you cannot count” (David and Sutton 2004:203). That is without coding data, analyzing and interpreting the data will be very difficult.

Transcription of the interviews was done by carefully listening to each audio recording and then translating them into text. Though it was a very difficult task, being diligent helped the student to translate the text successfully. After each interview has been translated, the text was carefully read through and then coded. Various themes were chosen to be used to code the text. The various themes used to code the text were from the interviews and it was words that the participants used to describe their experiences.

Since the study was examining the experiences of the respondents, it was important that the themes used to code the text were from the respondents themselves. Three of the themes used were words that the respondents used during the interviews while the rest were chosen by the student from the interviews. The themes were used to reduce the text from the interviews and also to analyze the text efficiently. The themes used therefore help the reader

to understand the whole view point of the respondents and also be able to understand the interviews well.

## 4 Findings

This study was done to find the out the experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge project. Three unemployed clients were interviewed based on their experience to the Bridge project. The main themes that were derived from the interviews are explained below.

### 4.1 Employment

The respondents felt that their chances of getting employed have increased by visiting Bridge front office. Though they have not yet been employed, they said they have starting getting calls from employees and they were very sure of getting employed soon. The respondents felt that the services they had received from the Bridge front office on employment issues have helped their changes in getting job.

I have got a lot of places that they have job openings that I have called and ask for job. So (Bridge) helped me to seek for something. (Respondent A).

I have got a lot of places to apply for work. Though I have not got a job yet, i hope someone will call me soon. (Respondent C).

The participants thought that the services Bridge gives as compared to the other job seeking centers they have visited were better. Bridge front office allowing the customers to use telephone and fax services has helped participants to increase their chances of getting employment.

I have got a lot of places to apply for job. Using the internet and sometimes telephone at Bridge has helped me in finding job soon. (Respondent B)

From the account of the participants, the Bridge project is doing well in terms of helping customers to find job. In the era of economic downturn, job seeking centers need to be pragmatic to be able to help its customers to find job. This is because record number of



people will be apply for a smaller job vacancies and the applicant with a better form of job seeking approach will find work.

#### 4.2 Empowerment

The participants were of the view that the information that the Bridge front office gives about the study of Swedish language has empowered them in such a way that they now have a new knowledge thus Swedish language. The participants thought that by coming to Bridge, they have gained some knowledge that they could not have gotten elsewhere. One participant thought that he has gotten the chance to learn the Swedish language which will increase his chances of getting work in Finland. Since Finland is a bilingual country, knowing one or all the two official languages helps one to increase the chances of getting employment. Another participant also thought that if he is able to learn the Swedish language, his chances of being employed will be high and so he has made plans to start enrolling to the Swedish language course at Bridge.

I am learning Swedish at Bridge now and i think it will help me to get work easily at a place where they want someone with a Swedish language background. (Respondent B).

I think that by learning the Swedish language too, it will help me in finding work since some job places speaks more Swedish than Finnish as my friends told me. Because of this i am planning to join the Swedish language course at Bridge. (Respondent A).

One participant also thought that by learning how to write a curriculum vitae in a Finnish context, he has gain some knowledge that will help him as he continue searching for employment in Finland. Since most customers writes their curriculum vitae in the home country's format, employees in Finland finds it difficult sometimes to understand it. Therefore Bridge, helping customers write their curriculum vitae in the Finnish format increases their chances of getting employed.

By helping me to write my curriculum vitae in Finnish way, i think i have learn something that I can use forever in Finland as i keep searching for work. (Respondent C).

#### 4.3 Privacy

All the participants felt that their privacy where compromise when they visit the Bridge front office. They thought that the front office was too small and that people normally walk around the office when they are having session with the personnel. The participants thought that an enclosed office would have been better as compared to the one that Bridge has now.

It is very small and open and so you cannot have your privacy. (Respondent A).

As you know it is too open. When you are talking people pass around and sometimes you do not feel good. (Respondent B).

The participant thought that an open office space normally brings some inconveniences and so an office space where people will not disturb will be convenience.

It is very open and nice actually. The only problem I do not like the place is when you are there, people walk around and sometimes they disturb you. (Respondent C).

The participants were sometimes worried that the discussion they are having with the front office personnel is being listened to by a third party. That sometimes makes them feel uncomfortable and they had wished that the office space would have been enclosed.

#### 4.4 Network with other agencies

The participants thought that by visiting the Bridge front office, they have got the contact of other related immigrant agencies. The participants felt that the connections they have got will help them in a long run in integrating into the Finnish system. Since most of the programs of these agencies are related to immigrants, networking with such agencies helped the customers to gain more insight into the Finnish job market. Some of these agencies also have some connections with other job centers and so will help these customers in finding work easily.

I have also got some connections to some immigrant's centers by visiting the place. I know Caisa through Bridge. (Respondent C)

Through them also i got to know Caia and there I go for programs and also meet lot foreigners. (Respondent A).

One participant also got to know Bridge when he visited Caia for some personal matters. And so the collaboration of these two centers really helps the customers in a long run.

Somebody at Caia cultural center introduced me to the place (Bridge) and the reason i came here is to look for job. (Respondent B).

#### 4.5 Support and tutoring

The participants thought that Bridge front office helped to by giving them guidance in applying to job openings. The participants also thought that supported them in all the process they went through to search for jobs and apply them. The support the participants got from the personnel of the Bridge front office ranges from searching for the jobs, applying, using the telephone services from the office to calling job centers and writing curriculum vitae to Finnish context.

They are very nice and always ask you the questions and what you to be comfortable to tell them what you want. They even call some places for you. That is amazing. (Respondent A).

At Bridge they even allow you to use the telephone to call job places. I know anytime i visit Bridge someone will talk to me nicely. (Respondent B).

One participant thought that by tutoring him on how to write curriculum vitae in a Finnish context, his chances of gaining employment is bright. He also felt that Bridge personnel personally took interest in their issues and tries to help them at all cost. The personnel made sure their application becomes successful.

They also advice you on ways of applying for jobs and helps you to apply for jobs. ( Respondent C).

## 5 Discussion.

This study was undertaken to examine the experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge projects. The Bridge project undertakes a number of programs to help unemployed immigrants who have just arrived in Finland and are searching for job. Also as the economic recession affects the job market and a quite a large number of immigrants losing their jobs, services should be provided to help them find new jobs.

The findings of this study showed that clients chances of gaining employment has increased after visiting the front office of Bridge. Some clients have started receiving calls from employers and that they have high hopes of being employed soon. Clients have been empowered by the services they received at Bridge. Clients knowledge have increased as compared to the time they had not visited the front office and that gaining this new knowledge will help them in gaining employment soon.

Being able to connect to other agencies rendering similar services for immigrants, client's knowledge on the Finnish job market has increased and that integrating to the Finnish society has been better. The support the clients receive has been helpful in searching and applying to job openings. Client's chances of gaining employment have increased with the kind of support they have received. Clients took exceptions on their private issues and that they did not feel comfortable visiting the front office of Bridge because of the size of the front office.

When a foreigner arrives in Finland and does not already have a job offer before coming to Finland, the foreigner apply as an unemployed job seeking applicant at the job centre in the municipalities that he or she resides. There are usually an arrangement to first meet an employment consultant and the foreigner together with the employment consultant discuss the type of job that the foreigner or immigrant is willing to do. The job centre in consultation with the municipality social services come up with a plan for the immigrant based on the law of the municipality. Usually, it is a plan that discusses how the immigrant is going to integrate into his or her new environment, whether the immigrant is happy with his or her residence, how the immigrant is going to enroll to study Finnish or Swedish language, how the immigrant is going to update his or her educational and practical skills if any and how the immigrant is going to get other information that will help him or her to integrate well. (City of Jyväskylä, immigrants pages, 2009). The period of unemployment is a serious one and has psychological implications (Gallie, Marsh and Voglar 1994:213). And so Bridge's method of engaging the unemployed clients personally is a laudable one. Bridge allows the clients to use other services like the telephone and internet in job searching and that has really helped the clients. The chances of the clients being employed has increased since they starting visiting the front office.

In the findings of Pekonen (2006) , respondents were surprised that officials from the employment office sometimes withheld information about a vacancy. This actually ended up reducing the chances of the immigrants gaining employment. It is in light of this that clients of Bridge were happy that because of the approach by personnel of Bridge front office, their chances of gaining employment has increased with some of them beginning to receive phone calls from employers.

The findings of this study showed that clients felt empowered by the knowledge of a new language and that this new knowledge will help them in increasing their chances of gaining employment. The participants were of the view that the information that the Bridge front office gives about the study of Swedish language has empowered them in such a way that they now have a new knowledge thus Swedish language. The Bridge project in collaboration with Arbis organize Swedish language course for foreigners. There foreigners can learn the Swedish language and since Finland is bilingual country, they will familiarize themselves in their new environment easily.

The empowerment approach is guided by the simultaneous concern of people and their environment (Devore and Schlesinger 1999:129). In that when empowering individuals there is an integral connection between personal and public issues. The clients gaining the knowledge in Swedish language empowers them to have something that the public needs and as such helps the individual to integrate easily.

Knowledge of the Swedish language can help the client to be employed easily against someone without the knowledge of the Swedish language. This is because Finland is a bilingual country requires someone to have at least one knowledge of the official languages. This motivated the participants who have not yet started the Swedish language course to believe that when they have the knowledge of the Swedish language, their chances of gaining employment will be higher. The participants who have started the language also thought that when they complete the language course, their chances of gaining employment will be high.

The Findings of this study reaffirm the statement from the web page of the employment office in Finland which states that the language of one of the official languages is essential to one gaining employment in Finland. Those without any knowledge of the official languages find it difficult to find work.

The findings of this study showed that client have been connected with other immigrant's agencies and that it has helped them to integrating into their new environment. Bridge liaises with Caisa cultural center and that immigrants who visit the front office of Bridge are

directed to Caisa cultural center. Likewise, clients who visit Caisa cultural center are also directed to Bridge front office. Since the two organizations works are different, they complement each other to the advantage of the immigrant. Bridge project and Caisa cultural center organize workshops for schools. These workshops are organized to create awareness of immigrant's culture. Young people from the Swedish-Finish and young people from the immigrant's communities also attend such workshops. At workshops like this, immigrants meet people from various communities and by so doing create some friendship which in the end helps them to integrate into their new environment.

The social network approach is important in social work, in that the individual is best understood in the social network in which he or she exists. Problems of the individual are also best accessed in his or her social network. The individual is able to access opportunities in a social network. In the same way, Bridge project and Caisa cultural centers collaborating helps customers to access information on different issues easily and then create networks with other immigrants.

Clients acknowledged the support and tutoring they got at the Bridge front office in that it has helped them in their search and applying for job. Bridge front office allowing the clients to use other services like the fax, internet, and telephone has made their search for job easily. Also, the front office joins the clients in searching for the jobs and helps them to follow up. Bridge front office tutoring the clients to write their curriculum vitae in Finnish context has also helped them. In most cases, the curriculum vitae of the clients do not conform to the Finnish standard and so employers usually reject them.

Social support refers to the various types of assistance that people receive from others and is generally classified into emotional, instrumental and informational support (John and MacArthur, 1999). The support that the unemployed gets ranges from gaining access to database of employers, joining other social groups to relieve the psychological effects that unemployment brings and visiting government and non-for-profit agencies dedicated to helping unemployed people cope. The Bridge front office helping clients to search for employment information and helping them to apply for jobs is an act of support which helps the client in gaining employment.

Tutoring is a process of imparting knowledge and skill. (Answers.com, 2009). Tutors do not solve problems but then they help the individual with knowledge and skill to solve problems. The effect of tutoring in an educational system is known. Student with problems adjusting to school schedule are helped in tutorial sessions by tutors. In the labour market also, private tutors help people with all kinds of problems for a fee. At Bridge front office, clients are helped with their curriculum vitae so that it conforms to the Finnish standard. This helps the

clients to in gaining employment easily.

The concept of empowerment talks about the relationship between professionals and service users where the professional involves the service user in planning activities that affect the service user.(Leedbetter 2002:201). Here, the professional helps the clients and not that the professional does everything for the client to solve his or her problem. In the same way, Bridge front office supports the clients in ways that helps the clients to manage and overcome his or her problem but not necessary doing solving their problems for them.

The findings of this study also showed that clients were not comfortable visiting Bridge front office because of privacy issues. Clients thought that the front office was too open and that people move around the place when they are there. The effect of unemployment is diverse and has social and psychological implications.(Gallie,Marsh and Vogler ,1994:213).

People without work have been found to have elevated depression, anxiety and somaticism. Research has concluded that the health of some unemployed did not reduce even when unemployment ended, in that their symptoms became chronic (American Journal of Public Health. 1985:502-506). It is understandable that unemployed clients felt that their privacy is being compromise since the effect of unemployment might be having a toll on them.

Though people feel concern and have strong feelings about privacy and are very concerned to protect themselves from the abuse or misuse of their personal information they sometimes trade it with other benefits. (Humphrey Taylor, 2003). And so though client of Bridge project feel that their privacy is been compromise, they still visit the front office because the prospect of gaining employment is high for them.

In conclusion, the Bridge project with its well structured programs has helped unemployed immigrants to increase their chances of gaining employment. Also, the unemployed clients also feel empowered by leaning a new and national language of Finland and that with this knowledge they will find job soon. The front office of the Bridge project helps unemployed immigrants in searching and applying for jobs and this has also increase their chances of gaining employment. Though client of the Bridge project were of the view that the front office was small, it did not discouraged them from visiting the front office as the benefit they derive from the front office out weight their privacy.

Trustworthiness of a research and issues of ethics are important when undertaking qualitative research. Trustworthiness and validity of a research is established around researchers using lay down procedures and being systematic. Validity is the extent to which the instrument captures what it is designed to measure. In validity, it is not the test that is valid but rather the interpretation of data arising from a specific procedure (Buer and Gaskell 2000:240). Trustworthiness also talks about the use of practices approved by the academic communities using generally accepted procedures and accurate research work. (Bryman and Burgess 1999:366).

“Ethics is the science of morality: those who engage in it determine values for the regulation of human behavior” (David and Sutton 2004:17). In collecting information about people during research raises ethical issues in the focus of attention and the methods going to be used. In the declaration of Helsinki, adopted by the world Health Organization in 1964 it was clearly stated that when researching on human subject participants should voluntarily consent. This is usually done by the participants signing an informed consent. Informed consent “means the knowing consent of individual to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation”( David and Sutton 2004:18).

I tried as much as possible to ensure the ethics in this study by following guidelines throughout this study. The subject of this study was concluded with the help of the working life partner, the coordinator of the Bridge project. Also, there was little research that has been done on the client’s experiences on a multicultural center and even with that it was done and written in Finnish language. This made it difficult for the student to find accurate previous studies and references for this study.

In conducting the various interviews, i made sure the confidentiality of the participants was assured. The student tried to be open and explicit during the interviews and also the participants participated voluntarily. Though all the participants signed an informed consent, the student made it clear that participant can withdraw if they wished to. The identity of the participants was anonymous and also the student made sure the participants were not misrepresented. The interviews were recorded to make the student remain focused and have full concentration so as to probe with questions to bring out all the important information needed to conduct this study. In transcribing the interviews the student did not leave out any data or summarize but then i transcribed it word for word. When analyzing the data, the student used necessary theories and literature.

Bryman(2008) suggested four criteria in which qualitative research can be evaluated. The four criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.



The credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant and users of the research and also how well the researchers are able to interpret the reality and the informant's perception of events. The establishment of the credibility criteria of finding entails ensuring research is carried out according to the canons of good practice (Bryman 2008:377). In conducting the interviews, the student used focused interview so as to get enough information from the participants. Since there were little previous studies and even finding literature for this study was difficult, the student needed as much information from the participants and that was the reason for choosing focus interviews. The selection of the participants was based on the snowball sampling method, and with that since experiences is relative and one person experience will be different from the other and so choosing random sampling method helps the student to have diverse views of client's experience. The student consulted the working life partner and also the supervisors of this thesis in every step.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Bryman 2008:378). From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. From the first day, it was obvious that the management of the Bridge project were going to use the result of this study in the annual report. Therefore, due diligence was followed to make sure the result are transferable. The informants were not coerced and that they voluntarily consented. The purpose of this study was to find the experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge projects, and so the results of this study applied to the day to day activities of the Bridge project.

The idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. This entails that researchers ensures that complete records are kept of all phases of the research process; "problem formation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions are all in accessible manner" (Bryman:2008:378) . Throughout this study, the student benefited from various thesis workshops and seminars where thesis processes were discussed and explained. Also the student had tutorial session with the thesis supervisors and the working life partner was also helpful. All the informants where chosen with the help of the working life partner. Although, the student planned to interview between six to eight participants, only three interviews was conducted due to difficulty in getting participants. The student used the data from the three interviews to in analyzing and writing the report.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study to show that he or she acted in good faith (Bryman 2008:379). All the data from the various data was kept and referred to during the thesis process. Also the data has been kept so that anybody who wishes to verify can have access to the data. Again, i made sure i kept the data throughout the thesis process so that i can check and be sure of myself if am following lay down guidelines and procedures. The report of this study will also go through the process that thesis have to go through before being accepted at Laurea University of applied sciences.

Qualitative methods deals with people giving out information and as such ethical issues arise. In most cases, qualitative methods handle sensitive information and personal information about participants. Confidentiality and anonymity are two key words that are very important when doing qualitative research.

Anonymity refers “to the situation where you do not know or do not record the personal details of those researched”(David and Sutton 2004:19), while confidentiality refers “to the situation where the information is known and recorded by the researcher, but is not revealed(David and Sutton 2004:19). Usually, it is because of data protection law of the country that the research took place. In doing this study, i was fully aware of the oath of confidentiality as the legislation in Finland prescribes and so i did not reveal the address of the informants although some of them gave it out. Also since the outcome of this study will be used by the Bridge project, i did not reveal the names of the informants. Also I made sure the informants consented before being interviewed.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Consent form

#### Consent form

My name is Sampson Twum and a Bachelor of Social service degree student at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. As a requirement of my Degree Programme i am carrying out a research. The theme of my thesis is to study the experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge project to the services offered them by the front office. To complete the study, i am carrying out this interviews and i will be grateful if you could partake in this interview.

This form in intended to further ensure confidentiality of data obtained during the course of the study entitled “Experiences of unemployed clients of the Bridge project to the services offered them by the front office.” All participants in this research will be asked to read the following statement and sign their names indicating they agree to comply.

I hereby affirm that i will not reveal or in any manner disclose information obtained during the course of this study. I agree to discuss material directly related to this study only with the supervisor of this study. In any report or published material i write, i agree to remove any informant’s name

Participant’s Name: .....

Signature : .....

Phone No. : .....

## Appendix 2 Interview guide

### Interview guide

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Could you please describe yourself?

#### *MAIN BODY.*

How many month/years have you been visiting Bridge Front office?

How do you describe the physical set-up of the Bridge front office?

How do you describe the personnel at Bridge Front office?

How do you describe the services you receive at the Front office?

What motivates you to come to Bridge Front office?

What communication problems do you face when you visit the Front office? And how does the front office handles it?

What impact has the services you receive at Bridge Front office have on your life?

What other services do you receive at the Front office which you don't expect?

Do you want to suggest anything that should be done to the services that the Front office gives?

What personal advice will you give to the personnel at the Front office?



